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SUBJECT: ABDUCTEE RETURNS

11. (SBU) Meeting with Poloff on April 8, UNICEF Child Protection Officer Viktor Nylund described the recent activities of the Committee on the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC) as "limited" and "disorganized." Formed in 1999 within the Government of Sudan's (GoS) Ministry of Justice, CEAWC seeks to resolve the status of thousands of Dinka women and children abducted from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal prior to 1989, during the North-South civil war.

12. (SBU) CEAWC negotiated the release of 95 individuals (65 children) in the Nyala region of South Darfur, and 71 individuals (41 children) in the Ed Daein region of South Darfur, in March 2008. UNICEF monitored the return process. Nylund said that CEAWC's Dinka community workers regularly denied access for social workers from the State Ministries of Social Welfare, and kept UN staff from interviewing new arrivals, viewing convoy departure manifests, and visiting returnee transit centers. When UNICEF workers were able to visit transit centers, they noted that 100 returnees awaiting transport were crammed into three small rooms and were subsequently put on convoys heading south with limited access to food and water.

13. (SBU) UNICEF describes CEAWC's reintegration procedures as non-existent. In some cases, abductees have been absent from their home communities for two decades, and some are second generation abductees, born to parents already in bondage. At the conclusion of their trip "home," abductees are "dumped under a tree," in the words of Nylund. The GoS and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) do not coordinate the return convoys, and the GoSS makes no preparations for their returns, said Nylund. He said CEAWC does not track the abductees upon their return, and Dinka tribal authorities have no mechanism to integrate abductees into their former communities.

14. (SBU) Background: Militias from the Baggara tribes, notably the Rizeigat and the Misseriya, raided Dinka villages for slaves as forced labor in Southern Kordofan and South Darfur during the long North-South war. CEAWC operated from 1999 to 2006, claiming to return approximately 2,000 abductees to Bahr el-Ghazal, and was mostly dormant until the GoSS granted CEAWC 1 million dollars in February 2008 to resume its activities. CEAWC receives no funding from international NGOs; UNICEF has not provided funding since 2004. Due to the serious shortcomings in CEAWC's recent activities described, UNICEF may consider pulling its limited support this month. It is estimated that several thousand abductees may remain in South Darfur and Southern Kordofan.

15. (SBU) Comment: Despite its criticism of CEAWC, in an October 2007 internal review UNICEF noted that CEAWC is currently the only mechanism available to return the remaining abductees. Post will check with both UNHCR and IOM to see if there may be some way of supporting or coordinating with CEAWC to assist in this effort. Since many of the returnees have not been to their home areas in two generations, it is important to facilitate adequate reintegration

but this is generally an endemic problem in much of South Sudan.

FERNANDEZ